

Business Design Thinking and Doing

Angèle M. Beausoleil

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Frameworks, Strategies and Techniques for Sustainable
Innovation

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Angèle M. Beausoleil
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON, Canada

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To the curious and inquisitive ones, keep questioning the status quo.

Preface

Good design is good for everyone. It serves a purpose and communicates that purpose effectively. Through form, function and simplicity, design expresses beauty and efficiency.

Good design also builds trust, value and profits. Organizations deserve good design. Business leaders are now demanding it.

In today's uncertain economic climate, business schools are increasingly expected to prepare future leaders to navigate unforeseen crises, embrace new knowledge systems and manage teams and their firms towards prosperity. At the same time, many organizations continue to struggle with their innovation mandates, hobbled by a mix of pragmatism, fear and arrogance. With significant investments in current systems and structures, they resist change. Why invest in new ways of working and profiting? The curse of that past success is that they lack the courage to retool their human and technological systems to adapt to uncertain socio-economic conditions. And crucially, they both lack the curiosity to learn how their customer needs are changing, and from the best practices of those in adjacent sectors.

Innovation processes inherently require continuous reinvention. This dilemma can be solved by:

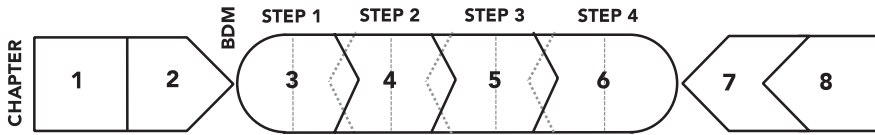
1. first understanding how innovation actually happens
2. observing and identifying key issues relating to market needs and
3. strategically designing an improved, integrated and multidisciplinary approach that can be sustained over time.

This textbook introduces Business Design as an emergent and important pedagogy and practice to enable a mindset and skillset that integrates business thinking with design doing. It's a recipe that draws on courage to deliver what customers actually need, and what stakeholders and shareholders want.

Authored and crafted by a design practitioner turned innovation scholar and pedagogue, this book is a guide of sorts that integrates over 25 years of business design and innovation leadership practice with over 10 years of innovation literacy research and teaching. It aims to instruct and inspire the next generation of innovation designers, managers and leaders.

Building upon personal and proven design industry practices and innovation development processes,¹ this book introduces, explains and provides visual models, frameworks, strategies and case examples of Business Design—an agile approach to design-driven innovation. Business Design is a way of thinking and working that applies human-centred design to improving or transforming business activities. It draws upon social science, design, marketing and strategy to

1 Rogers et al. (2014). *Diffusion of innovations* (pp. 432–448). Routledge.



■ Fig. 1 Diagram of textbook chapters and Business Design Method steps as modules

create business value, from innovative new products, services and processes, to creative strategies and business models.

The Business Design method (BDM) simplifies the innovation development process into four steps or actions: start, find, frame and solve. The BDM is primarily a competency-building framework for design-driven innovation. The BDM's steps, techniques and exercises nudge one's orientation towards more responsible and responsive innovation. The four-step Business Design method is unpacked, verified through a complement of mini-case examples, and packaged into critical learning blocks leading to insightful decision-making and sustained value creation.

Designed for both instructors and students, this 'actionable book' offers key learning objectives for each chapter, warm up and associated exercises, case examples and worksheets. It offers a suite of prompts and templates for active learning, discussion and practice. Its modular design is flexible and adaptable for both linear and topic-based teaching and facilitating. Each chapter is a self-contained module that offers key topics that can be introduced as single subjects, or can be combined with other chapters, to suit your unique instructional needs. For example, if you are focused on new product development, you might begin with ► Chapter 5 or BDM step 3 (i.e. integration) and explore how best to integrate your new product concept into existing systems using design-driven business frameworks, and then skip back to the ► Chapter 3 or BDM step 1 (i.e. initiation) to craft an updated product design brief. Choose your own adventure (and direction) (■ Fig. 1).

This book embodies the principles of project-based learning. Similar to workplace initiatives, project-based learning (PBL) aids students (as active project participants) to develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication skills. Project-based courses are designed to guide students to learn by doing. A challenge brief is offered as the 'project' which serves as a real-world problem that requires further articulation and ultimately, solving. Similar to a capstone or practicum course, students demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a prototype or proposed solution to a real audience (company and/or customer). The project (or course unit) is team based, however individuals are expected to contribute equally to its completion. Note: for industry trainers, the project is replaced by a real and urgent business problem.

For instructors or trainers, this book reflects the double-loop learning educational concept,² which involves teaching learners of all types, to think more

2 Argyris. (1977). Double loop learning in organizations. *Harvard Business Review*, 55(5), 115–125.

deeply about their own assumptions and beliefs prior to engaging in the design or redesign of organizational products, structures, strategies and policies. If you're applying this book as a curricular course unit, the chapters offer a sequential breakdown of the process of innovation to move from initiation to implementation guided by a proposed 'project'. If you're training in-house managers or teams, the four stage and four-step sequence provides facilitators a structured pathway for innovation development, professional collaboration and workplace application to a real business challenge. Throughout the book, students and participants are encouraged to build awareness of their personal thinking and decision-making style and how to adapt it to participate effectively in the exciting, albeit challenging, innovation process. It's the place where business and design meet. If referencing this book for short, modular-based training programmes, each chapter offers specific topics for discussions along with techniques for practice, and it's designed as self-contained modules.

As a comprehensive guidebook, notebook, workbook and reference book, the use of doodles, markings and sketches is strongly encouraged. Make it your personal navigation guide through the challenging and complex innovation development journey.

Each chapter (as module) invites reflection. It's designed to grant the reader permission to pause, reflect and appreciate how an innovation project gets initiated, what and who is investigated, why, what and how the process involves end-users and internal stakeholders, and when the new offer (product or service) is brought to market. At the end of each chapter the reader is prompted to reflect on the section topics, as well as their own and/or companies' innovation journey and processes. By the end of this book, readers will have gained an innovation and design literacy required to better navigate the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (aka VUCA) world in which we currently work and live. Below is a brief outline of each chapter.

► *Chapter 1* introduces the building blocks of innovation: how it's defined, what it means and how it works. Influential ideologies, conditions and factors are outlined. A simple four-stage design-driven innovation development model acts as the critical framework for understanding how it happens, how some organizations have failed and why others have succeeded. This chapter outlines and explains each stage: (1) initiation, (2) investigation, (3) integration and (4) implementation. Short business cases are provided throughout.

► *Chapter 2* introduces the origin, practice and discipline of Business Design, and the four-step Business Design Method (BDM). The BDM is an agile, integrative and rigorous approach to navigating the four stages of innovation. This method guides learners to design, participate in and/or manage a design-driven innovation development process or project. This chapter introduces the most common business-oriented design practices, and unpacks each of the four BDM steps: (1) Start, (2) Find, (3) Frame and (4) Solve. Each step is presented in an optimized sequence through ► Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

► *Chapter 3* launches the first stage of the innovation process (Initiation) and the first step of the Business Design Method (Step 1: Start). This chapter is divided into two parts that can be delivered as two sequential classes or two

distinct and separate modules. Part I introduces key mindsets and competencies associated with each innovation stage and business design step. Part II kick-starts the project-based learning experience, through a challenge brief and innovation design brief. Because innovation, unlike invention, is a team sport, team mapping and forming techniques are provided along with case examples. A proposed challenge brief is offered as an outline for a course or workplace training programme.

► *Chapter 4* outlines the second stage of the innovation process (Investigation) and the second step of the Business Design Method (Step 2: Find). This chapter is divided into two parts which can be delivered as two sequential classes or as two distinct and separate modules. Part I introduces need finding, design research principles and data collection methods. Part II introduces thick data sorting and analysis techniques to arrive at key insights. Both sections build upon the Innovation Design Brief. Observational or field research and empathy interviews are explained with the focus on human, culture and context understanding and narrative data (thick data) collection.

► *Chapter 5* introduces the third stage of the innovation process (Integration) and the third step of the Business Design Method (Step 3: Frame). This chapter is divided into two parts that can be delivered as two sequential classes or as two distinct and separate modules. Part I introduces problem framing and reframing. Part II offers ways of translating insightful problems into novel and relevant ideas and rough prototypes.

► *Chapter 6* outlines the fourth and final stage of the innovation process (Implementation) and the fourth step of the Business Design Method (Step 4: Solve). This chapter is also divided into two parts that can be delivered as two sequential classes or as two distinct and separate modules. Part I outlines final prototyping and evaluation strategies. Part II introduces storytelling, pilot implementation plan development and performance measures design. Story-based frameworks are introduced throughout the chapter and serve as the most effective approach to stakeholder-buy in of new strategies, products, services, plans and measures. Of note, the outputs (as artifacts) generated from each step (from ► Chapters 3 to 6) serve as important building blocks and communicate elements for the implementation plan.

► *Chapter 7* makes an explicit case for reflective practice and introspection. Although each chapter ends with a series of question prompts for instructors to ask, and/or for students to reflect upon, this chapter outlines why reflection is important for innovation participants, managers and leaders. It offers a suite of reflection techniques for individuals and teams to pause and reconsider each stage and step of their learning journey, before proceeding to the next, or returning to the previous one.

► *Chapter 8* offers a comprehensive set of templates and worksheets referenced from each chapter. The Appendix section offers examples of completed worksheets as reference for both instructors and students (or participants).

This work was crafted by a designer, manager, strategist, educator and innovator. It embodies multidisciplinary theories, practices, methods, techniques and voices. It offers an alternative perspective from other business and innovation

management books as it exposes the failures of over-investing in technologies and profit-first myopia. It offers evidence and strategies that demonstrate the why and how of investing in our human and social systems as a means of delivering impactful success and sustained prosperity.

As a professor at an elite business school, it's my responsibility to educate and inspire students and future leaders to develop an evolved world view. I strive to act as an example of how you can thrive by earning the permission to question stale management frameworks that focus on trade-offs instead of tensions. I'm also here to provide guidance on gaining new perspective or view into how decisions are made, and insights into human needs.

In response to an unprecedented era of global pandemics and disruptive supply chains, management education must redesign its offerings to include both traditional frameworks and more innovative, empathic and enabling methods of leadership. If implemented, business design, as a type of design leadership, may enable large and small firms to redesign their value systems and support their transition to new economies. In uncertain contexts, climates and conditions, innovation participants and managers can all benefit from thinking and acting more like business designers.

This textbook is designed for educators—university professors and corporate facilitators. It is a starting point to your journey of thinking and doing, learning and teaching others, the ways of business design. I hope it proves to be informative, instructional and transformative. I encourage you to use it as reference book or source for case examples and techniques for innovation management and strategy courses.

“Business Design is like therapy for your business”—Starbucks executive

Angèle M. Beausoleil
Toronto, Canada

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It takes a team to design anything of consequence, and make good design available to everyone.

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Thanks also to Palgrave MacMillan and Springer for publishing this book and for the Bauhaus design-inspired cover.

A special thank you to the founders, educators, students and practitioners of Bauhaus design. As a designer, the importance of the art form of communicating anything is paramount. I strive for a minimalist design that is understandable, yet provokes. In a complex and complicated world, we need more simplicity. Simplicity that is smart, not dumb. Simplicity that strips away excess, over-engineering and technological abundance, to arrive at the basics. The basic forms and shapes are used in new ways to help you navigate the fundamentals of innovation. The reflective prompts demand that you immerse yourself in the full range of materials and tech-

niques available, and learn by doing. The flexible structure is intentionally adaptive to a linear, circular or bi-directional experience. The strategies and frameworks aim to advocate new ways of approaching multi-faceted problems. These are Bauhaus design principles.

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Abbreviations

BD	Business Design	KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
BDM	Business Design Method	PBL	Project-based Learning
CPMs	Contemporary Performance Measures	PDP	Pre, During, Post
HMW	How Might We	POEMS	People, Objects, Environments, Messages, Services
IPMs	Innovation Performance Measures	POV	Point of View

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